

TAPE 009:
JIM ROSE
JULY 15, 2000

Jim was born in South Hampton and has lived most of his life in the Blue Point and East Patchogue area of Long Island. He began clamming during his junior high years for some extra money even though his family was really not a bay family. Describes the process of raking clams—also known as jerk raking. His early experiences led to his involvement in working full time on the bay in 1973. Jim clammed full time from 1973 to 1985 until the industry slowed down. During the next two or three years he was involved in construction until he went back to the bay in the late 1980s primarily as a fisherman. Jim speaks about the boats he has used in his occupation. He learned how to work the bay from a friend who took him under his wing but when digging clams you have to get the feel for it yourself—there are a lot of adjustments. To be good you have to constantly adjusting not only with equipment but also in regards to the bay. In the late 1970s one could see hundreds of boats just in the Patchogue area and now it's a stretch to see twenty-five boats a day. Jim got into gill netting through another friend who showed him how to build nets. In 1990 he started full time with gill netting and has built a bigger boat in order to carry out this activity. Jim fishes from April until the end of October. Describes the idea and act of gill netting. Speaks about making and using the nets. It takes awhile to build the nets and it is fairly expensive. Jim tries to use his spare time to rebuild nets due to working in the winter. He uses a twine needle for tying the line and work down the net. Jim likes to have a knot every six to seven inches—usually 1200 knots for every 300 feet of net. Uses a fisherman's expression that sometimes a "rag catches better because it doesn't sit as tight in the water" but does not like to see this—like to stay on top of gear. Talks about the spacing being important in knot tying. Jim can tie about fifty feet of net in an hour. For the past fifteen to twenty years he has been playing with how far apart the webbing should be for the nets. Hanging on the half is the term used when the webbing is stretched out completely you push back the knots so the webbing is on the half. Is constantly changing in order to catch the fish and to handle them quickly so the form is constantly changing. Speaks about the different diameters used to catch various species of fish and the size of the mesh depends not only on the fish but also the season. Describes the tightness of the "wall" of net. Describes the placement of nets in the water—does not place his nets in less than two feet of water. For weakfish you would want to set over shell that have worms and look for edges because it's a traffic area for fish. You want something that will catch and hold the fish but will not break and he likes to hang his net just beyond what would be called hanging on the half and uses number 12 monofilament line. The "belly" of the net describes the slack in the net. Jim has noticed that the ends of the net catch better. After getting past the first fifteen feet the net is more like a wall so the fish do not get stuck as easily. Jim does not like other setting on top of him because he spreads his nets out and uses the saying "what are we partner here" when confronting someone who is fishing too close. There are about six or seven fishermen who also do the same type of fishing as Jim and although the bay appears big the area that is good for fishing is small. Jim uses no machines to fish but does it all by hand except for the use of the boats motor. He enjoys working with his hands and derives satisfaction from this and it keeps him in shape. Jim built the boat he uses for gill netting and has built a duck boat. He designed the boat and set it up so that he would be able to work alone on the boat. It took two months to build and thinks its kind of pretty but will probably not build another. Jim explains, "you can look at the boat and tell whether it's a good looking boat

or an ugly boat.” For his duck boat he salvaged a boat and turned it into a hunting boat. Duck hunting was just something else to do on the water. By building the boats and nets it makes Jim feel like he has beat the system and when you are your own boss you are in control in your own environment. Jim would love to see the fishing last forever and working on the bay is a major part of his life. It gives a sense of accomplishing something—thinks of himself as a lazy workaholic. He keeps going back to the water because he enjoys it—it’s in his blood. He expresses hope that his sons will be able to learn what he has done in the bay. Speaks about the sunrises and sunsets on the bay and being close to nature gives him the feeling of being alive. Concludes by stating that baymen are hard working people with good morals who enjoy what they do. Hopes that the wall between people who work on the water and others could be overcome.